

BLACK *Joy* GUIDE

2026

GUIDING YOU

From before pregnancy to after birth,
explore advice to help ensure a
healthy experience for **you** and **baby**.



BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

Sections

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I honor my
joy,
my peace,
and my
well-being

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Dear Mama,

You are **seen**. You are **heard**.

You are deeply **loved**.

In a world that often asks you to carry so much, you don't have to do it alone. Your joy, your rest, your well-being—they matter. This guide was created with you in mind, to uplift, affirm, and support you on your journey through pregnancy, birth, and beyond.

The road to motherhood, in all its forms, comes with challenges, but it is also filled with love, power, and resilience. As Black mothers, we have always been the foundation of our families and communities. Our wisdom is deep, our strength unmatched, and our love boundless. But even the strongest among us deserve care, deserve softness, and deserve to be poured into.

my *Voice*,

my Birth

my *Power*

This guide connects you to the culturally affirming care, support networks, and resources that honor your experience. Whether you are a new mother, a seasoned parent, or somewhere in between, know that you are never alone. There is a village standing with you, ready to uplift and embrace you every step of the way.

So, Mama, take a breath. Take a moment for yourself. Take up space. Because you are magic, you are worthy, and you deserve all the joy this world has to offer.

**With love and solidarity,
Gabrielle Brown**

*Maternal and Infant Health
Program Manager*
Black Women for Wellness





At Black Women for Wellness, **we honor the strength and joy of motherhood** by nurturing the whole mama. Through education, advocacy, and community-led programs, we empower mamas with the resources and tools to thrive.

From advocating for equitable maternal health care to protecting our communities from environmental toxins and harmful beauty products, we are committed to ensuring the well-being of Black girls, women, and their families. Our work is rooted in love, care, and the belief that **every Black woman deserves to live well and be well.**

FAMILY PLANNING: KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Family planning is a personal journey, and having the right information can help you make choices that fit your health, goals, and values. This guide will walk you through different options and ways to advocate for yourself in healthcare.

1

ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF IN HEALTHCARE

Feel empowered to speak up for yourself:

- Bring a trusted advocate or doula to appointments if needed
- Keep a health journal to track symptoms, medications, and concerns
- Know Your Rights – You deserve care that is respectful, affordable, and free from bias
- Don't hesitate to switch doctors if your concerns are dismissed

2

FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

When choosing a family planning method, think about:

- Your long-term vs. short-term reproductive goals
- Your insurance coverage for fertility treatments, contraception, and maternity care options
- Fertility preservation options if you plan to get pregnant later
- Any religious, cultural, or ethical considerations



FAMILY PLANNING: KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

3

EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS

There are different ways to plan for pregnancy. Here are some options:

- Schedule check-ups with a trusted provider.
- Address reproductive conditions (e.g., fibroids, PCOS) that disproportionately affect Black women.
- Explore conception options, including IUI, IVF, egg/sperm donation, and surrogacy.
- Discuss legal protections such as second-parent adoption for LGBTQ+ couples.

4

PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

If you are thinking about having a baby, here are some steps to support a healthy pregnancy:

- Check employer policies on maternity/paternity leave and insurance coverage
- Budget for prenatal care, childbirth, and childcare expenses
- Discuss parenting values, discipline styles, and cultural traditions
- Connect with family, friends, and parenting communities for guidance





Congrats Mama, You're Pregnant!

Trust your Body.
HONOR YOUR
VOICE
Embrace Your Joy.

Congratulations on the beautiful journey of motherhood ahead, Queen!

May this pregnancy be filled with joy, protection, and abundant blessings. As you nurture your baby, remember that you are a reflection of generations of powerful Black women who have come before you, and you carry their wisdom, strength, and love in everything you do. Here's to your beautiful journey, rooted in love, strength, and unapologetic Black joy!

During Pregnancy

YOU KNOW YOUR BODY BEST

*I Advocate
for myself
and my baby
with courage +
confidence*





Birth Plan

Creating a birth plan is a powerful way for you to advocate for your needs and ensure you receive respectful, affirming, and culturally competent care.

Here are some key items to consider when building our your birth plan:

You have the power to choose your support team! Who do you want in the room with you? Whether you decide between an OBGYN, midwife, doula, or your partner, determine who you want present during labor and delivery for emotional and physical support.

Have you considered where you want to give birth? Hospital, birthing center, or at home? Would you like to have a natural birth? Consider natural methods or medical interventions that work best for you. Do you have a backup plan for unexpected complications? Have a conversation with your birth advocate about your preferences.

What cultural and spiritual traditions are meaningful to you? How do you want the room to look and feel? Lighting? Have a playlist in mind? Connect with your birth advocate to discuss your expectations.

Do you require uninterrupted bonding time/skin-to-skin contact after birth? Ask your birth advocate to inquire about lactation consultants. Ask about emotional support resources.



You have the power to use your voice, mama! Lean on your village and birth advocate as needed. You have the right to decline interventions. Have copies of your insurance and birth plan accessible for your records.

Know Your Rights

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Mama, you deserve maternal health care that is respectful, affordable, and free from bias.
Period.



SCAN THIS QR CODE
TO ACCESS
OUR ADVOCACY GUIDE
FOR MAMAS:



Medi-Cal Doula Benefit

What is the Medi-Cal Doula Benefit?

As of January 1st, 2023, California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) added full-spectrum doula services as an approved preventive service benefit covered under the Medi-Cal program.

Doulas provide preventative care services that include emotional, educational, and physical support to birthing families throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the first year postpartum.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



You can learn what services doulas provide, who may receive doula services, and a directory of doulas enrolled in Medi-Cal:



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SUPPORT NETWORKS

Black Infants & Families LOS ANGELES

AAIMM PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The Los Angeles County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality (AAIMM) Prevention Initiative is a coalition of the Department of Public Health in partnership with First 5 LA and the LA County Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, community organizations, mental and health care providers, funders, and community members. They are united in one purpose: to address the unacceptably high rates of Black infant and maternal deaths countywide and ensure healthy and joyous births for Black families in LA County.

<https://www.blackinfantsandfamilies.org/>



BEAUTY FOR ASHES MATERNAL WELLNESS

Educate, Empower, Elevate

Non-profit organization committed to improving the lives of BIPOC women, infants and birthing families and bring birth workers to serve these families.

Doula Hub funded by LA Care Health Plan to benefit low-income and uninsured residents of Los Angeles

Phone: (323) 450-7750

<https://beautyforashesmaternalwellness.com>



ABUNDANT BIRTH PROJECT

A guaranteed income program that provides Black pregnant women cash during pregnancy with no strings attached. It was developed to make birthing healthier and safer for the people facing the greatest risk during their pregnancy journey.

abundantbirthproject.org



BLACK DADDY DIALOGUE

Changing the narrative of African American/Black fathers and families to create a space where they can discuss their experiences of being a father and share their fatherhood journey.

Virtual meetings every 2nd Wednesday.

Email: dmauldin@ph.lacounty.gov

DURING PREGNANCY : YOU KNOW YOUR BODY BEST

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SUPPORT NETWORKS



BLACK INFANT HEALTH

To improve Black infant and maternal health as well as decrease health inequities in infant and maternal mortality rates by providing free services and empowering pregnant and mothering Black women to make healthy choices for a brighter future.

Address: 1968 W Adams Blvd STE 306, Los Angeles, CA 90018

Phone: (323) 238-3206

<https://blackinfanthealth.org>



CDU BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

The Black Maternal Health Center Of Excellence (BMHCE) provides maternity care & support in Los Angeles County. Services and support include:

- Prenatal and postpartum care
- Certified community midwives and doulas
- Mental health support, including assistance with perinatal and postpartum depression
- Non-Hospital-based labor and delivery support, including birth centers and home births
- Prenatal classes
- Lactation support

<https://www.bmhce.org/>



BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

A non-profit, reproductive justice organization committed to the health and well-being of Black women and girls through health education, self-empowerment, and advocacy.

Address: 4340 11th Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90008

Phone: (323) 290-5955

<https://bwwla.org/programs/sistersincontrol/black-maternal-and-infant-health/>

bwwla.org/



CINNAMOMS

CinnaMoms aims to create a cultural space that promotes empowerment and self-transformation for Black/African American women through virtual support circles. The CinnaTeam comes together to share and advocate for breastfeeding/chestfeeding, parenting, and health for the entire life course.

www.cinnamoms.org/

DURING PREGNANCY : YOU KNOW YOUR BODY BEST

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SUPPORT NETWORKS



**AFRICAN AMERICAN INFANT
AND MATERNAL MORTALITY
PREVENTION INITIATIVE**
FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

EXPECTING FATHERS GROUP

5-week cohort group designed specifically for fathers of black infants that provide education, support, and navigation tools for the prenatal, labor and delivery, postpartum, and parenting periods. Fathers can influence pregnancy outcomes through the support they provide birthing partners, encouragement for positive maternal behaviors, and their behaviors for improved birth equity. Fathers' involvement is associated with better birth outcomes..

Email: dmauldin@ph.lacounty.gov

www.blackinfantsandfamilies.org/fatherhood



THE IRT APP

The only app where you can find prenatal, birthing, postpartum and pediatric reviews of care from other Black and brown women. The #1 "Yelp-like" platform for the pregnancy and new motherhood journey, made by and for people of color. Search doctor and hospital reviews from your community! Leave a review today to help inform and protect others!

<https://irthapp.com/>



HAPPY MAMA HEALTH BABY ALLIANCE

- Training, Certification and Continuing Education Programs for Professionals
- Childbirth Doula and Postpartum Doula Services
- Breastfeeding Support Services
- Promoting Maternal Mental Health and Infant Mental Health
- Engendering Birthing Justice for All Childbearing Persons
- Amplifying the voices of Black, Indigenous and other persons of color and LBGTQIA+ persons about their experiences in maternity care.

Phone: 626-388-2191

<https://motherbabysupport.net/>



MOCHA MOMS

Mocha Moms, Inc. serves as an advocate for mothers of color and encourages the spirit of community activism within its membership.

<https://www.mochamoms.org/>

DURING PREGNANCY : YOU KNOW YOUR BODY BEST

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SUPPORT NETWORKS



Partners for Children
South L.A.

PARTNERS FOR CHILDREN SOUTH LA

Partners for Children South L.A. (PCSLA) is a collaborative effort of 40+ health and human services organizations that partner to provide links to services and cross-agency care coordination for children from birth through 5 years and their families.

Address: 301 N. Prairie Avenue, Suite 515
Inglewood, CA 90301

<https://partners4childrensla.org/>



SÜPRMARKT

SÜPRMARKT

“Providing low cost organic groceries to LA ‘food deserts’”

Address: 3526 W. Slauson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA, 90043

Phone: (424) 261-7877

<https://suprmarkt.la>



MIGHTY LITTLE GIANTS

MLG offers NICU support services, education and hope for mothers and fathers experiencing pre-term deliveries resulting in long-term stays in the hospitals' NICU. They also offer monthly peer-to-peer mentoring, emergency financial support, as well as life after the NICU life skills.

Mailing Address:

ATTN: Mighty Little Giants 38045 47th Street
E. STE. E #145 Palmdale, CA 93552

Phone: (213) 590-4859

<https://mightylittlegiants.org/>



The
VICTORIA
PROJECT

THE VICTORIA PROJECT

“Funding, Dignifying, & Resourcing Women and Families in the Holistic Home Births of Their Dreams”

the-victoria-project.com

BIRTHING CENTERS



KINDRED SPACE LA

Community-supported birth center specializing in midwifery care, childbirth classes, and providing a parenting community.

Address: 2610 Southwest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90043

Phone: (313) 381-5511

www.kindredspacela.com



MIND BODY BIRTH

Mind Body Birth offers complete Prenatal, Birth, and Postpartum care, as well as holistic Well Person, Fertility, and IUI services, including Pre-Pregnancy Counseling, and Hormonal and Genetic testing.

Address: 727 W 7th St Ste 711, Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (323) 536-2998

Pregnant and Postpartum Walking + Yoga Group for Black Parents and Babies

Email: maryam.abkarim@gmail.com

DURING PREGNANCY : YOU KNOW YOUR BODY BEST

BIRTHWORKER DIRECTORIES



FRONTLINE DOULAS

Community-based resource providing NO COST Doula care for pregnant people/birthing families in Los Angeles County who identify as African American.

Phone: (310) 817-0551

www.frontlinedoulas.com



SISTA MIDWIFE DIRECTORY CALIFORNIA

Directory created to help Black families find Black birth workers ranging from midwives, lactation support, and fertility support.

<https://www.sistamidwifedirectory.com/united-states/california>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH NOW

Dedicated to removing barriers to the prevention, screening, and treatment of prenatal and postpartum depression in Los Angeles County.

<https://maternalmentalhealthnow.org/>

Strength in Tiny Steps - Black NICU Family Circle

Free, virtual support group under Maternal Mental Health Now designed for Black mothers who currently have a baby in the NICU or have had one in the NICU within the past 3 years.

Facilitated by two black mothers, Dominique Djedje and Summer McBride, who have had babies in the NICU before.



OPEN PATHS COUNSELING CENTER

Open Paths Counseling Center's mission is to meet the evolving mental health needs of the community through quality counseling for individuals and families at affordable fees; free therapy programs for at-risk children and youth in local schools; and a highly-respected therapist training program.

Address: 301 N. Prairie Avenue, Suite 510
Inglewood, CA 90301

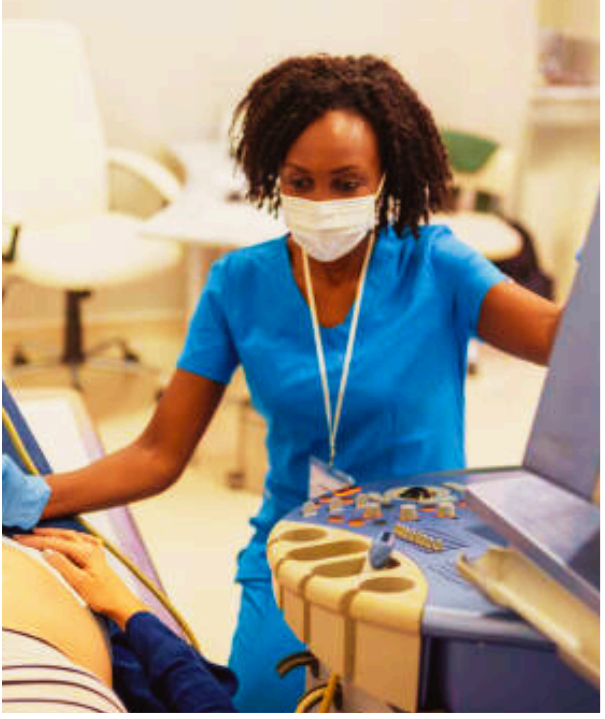
Phone: (310) 258-9737

WIN LOS ANGELES



WIN provides free, in-home mental health therapy and in-home comprehensive support to vulnerable families with young children.

Address: 5601 W Slauson Ave # 220, Culver City, CA 90230



BLACK OB/GYNS

SCAN TO
ACCESS THE
ASSOCIATION OF
BLACK WOMEN
PHYSICIANS
DIRECTORY



BLACKWOMENPHYSICIANS.ORG/MEMBER-DIRECTORY



COMMUNITY DOULAS



SCAN TO
ACCESS THE
FRONTLINE
DOULAS BLACK
DOULA
DIRECTORY



FRONTLINEDOULAS.COM/BLACKDOULADIRECTORY



Sacred Motherhood

NURTURING THE MIND & SOUL OF BLACK MAMAS

Prioritize your mental health by leaning into your friends, family, community, and support network. Schedule regular check-ins with a mental health provider or tap into community-based organizations that offer culturally affirming care.

Your well-being is just as important as prenatal checkups, and embracing your village can provide the emotional and mental support you need. Make time for self-care and reflection, knowing that caring for yourself strengthens both you and your baby.

my *Body*

my Love

and my

Journey

are **sacred**

Journal prompts set aside for weekly self-check-ins can encourage mamas to prioritize themselves and their mental well-being.



Holding Space

SHOWING UP FOR YOUR GROWING FAMILY

Supporting a pregnant partner is crucial, and Black fathers and partners play a vital role in ensuring a healthy and positive experience.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

1

Prepare for Birth Together

Attend birthing classes together, discuss birth plans, and openly communicate about her expectations and your role during labor and delivery. Reassure her that you're there for her every step of the way.

2

Advocate for you Partner in Medical Settings

Be her advocate when it comes to healthcare providers. If she feels uncomfortable or unheard, speak up on her behalf. Ensure she feels safe and supported during any medical appointments or procedures.

3

Offer Emotional and Physical Support

Pregnancy can be emotionally and physically draining. Be more mindful than usual with everyday tasks like preparing meals, offering massages, and making sure she stays comfortable



Holding Space

SHOWING UP FOR YOUR GROWING FAMILY

4

Encourage Healthy Habits

Support your partner in maintaining a healthy lifestyle by making nutritious meals together, going for walks, and participating in any wellness activities that benefit both her and the baby.

5

Communicating with Siblings

Age-appropriate conversations about the new baby can help older siblings understand the changes happening in the family. Be honest, but also keep things light and exciting, explaining how the family will grow and how their role as a sibling will change.

6

Connect with Other Parents & Support Groups

Find community groups or parenthood programs to connect with other Black dads and partners. Be open to sharing your experiences and learning from others who have been through similar journeys.

70%

of Black fathers who live with their children were most likely to have bathed, dressed, changed or helped their child with the toilet every day compared with their White (60%) or Hispanic (45%) counterparts

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2013 National Health Statistics Report."



Holding Space

SHOWING UP FOR YOUR GROWING FAMILY

I AM *Not Alone* my **community** stands with *Me*

7

Bond with the Baby Early

To help build a bond with the baby, try activities like talking to the baby, reading to them, or placing hands on the belly together.

8

Take Care of Yourself Too

Your health matters! Make time for self-care, rest, and emotional support. Lean on your friends and family when you need support or encouragement. You're doing amazing!



Black Mamas, Protecting Our Pregnancies Starts with Oral Health

Black women in the U.S. are more likely to have problems during pregnancy, like preeclampsia, early labor, and low-birth-weight babies. These issues are not just by coincidence—they're rooted in racial bias, chronic stress, inequities in health care, and other chronic conditions.

But Sis, did you know your gums can affect these problems too? Not taking care of your teeth and gums can raise the risk of problems during pregnancy.

Why Gum Health Matters

Gum disease happens when bacteria in your mouth cause swelling. If left untreated:

- Germs can enter your blood.
- Your body fights the germs by making chemicals.
- These chemicals cause swelling in your blood vessels and organs – even the placenta.

Poor oral health is linked to:



PREECLAMPSIA

Untreated gum disease can raise blood pressure, which is a warning sign of preeclampsia.



PRETERM BIRTH

Swollen gums can raise chemicals that start contractions early. This can make labor start too soon.



LOW BIRTH WEIGHT BABY

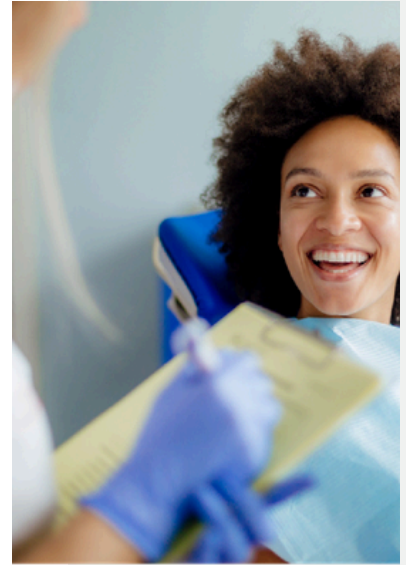
Swollen gums can affect how blood and nutrients reach the baby, which can slow the baby's growth.

So Sis, You Might Be Wondering...

IS IT SAFE TO SEE THE DENTIST DURING PREGNANCY?

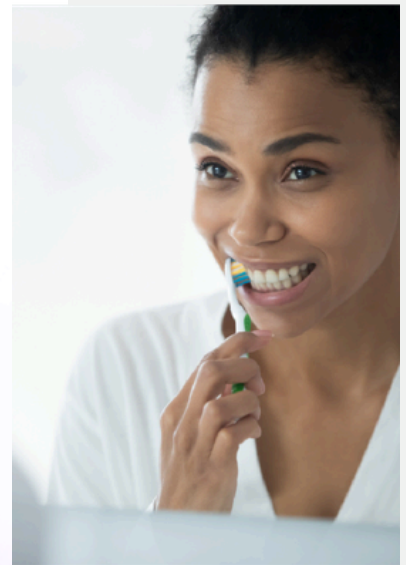
Yes. Dental care is safe during pregnancy

- Routine checkups and cleanings are safe
- Treatments like fillings, crowns, and extractions are safe
- Local anesthetics are safe
- Dental X-rays are safe with proper shielding
- Anytime during pregnancy is safe with the first and second trimesters being the most comfortable



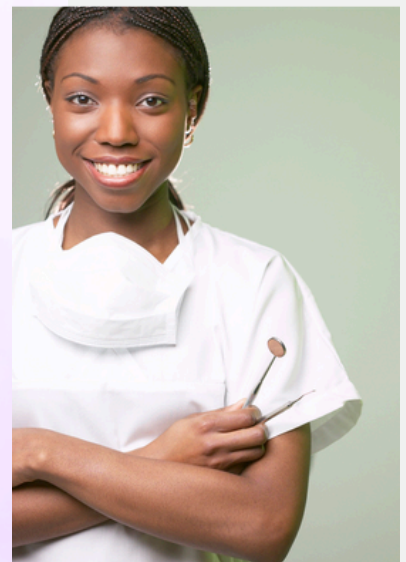
WHAT ARE ORAL TIPS TO REMEMBER DURING PREGNANCY?

- During pregnancy, hormone changes make your gums more sensitive
- Morning sickness can weaken enamel
Rinse with water after vomiting and wait 30 minutes before brushing
- Taking care of your oral health is really important especially if you have preeclampsia or gestational diabetes



WHAT SHOULD BE MY DAILY ORAL HEALTH ROUTINE?

- Brush twice a day, everyday with fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily
- Stay hydrated
- Eat healthy foods



WHERE CAN I FIND FREE OR LOW COST DENTAL SERVICES?

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Oral Health Program
- Smile, California
- Dial 2-1-1

Funded by the CDPH under Grant 22-10173

WIC in Los Angeles County

Your Access to Healthy Food Matters

You are seen. You are cared for. Your access to nourishing food matters – for you, your little ones, and your family. If you're on WIC here in LA County, you already have access to California's standard WIC benefits – but LA offers some extra perks to help your food dollars go even further. Let's break it down.

What WIC Gives You Across California

When you qualify, WIC helps you bring healthy food home and supports you on your journey as a parent:

- Monthly food benefits loaded on your WIC card (fruits & veggies, milk, eggs, whole grains, formula, and more)
- Nutrition education and one-on-one counseling
- Breastfeeding support – peer counselors, lactation consultations, and sometimes breast pumps
- Referrals to health care and other helpful services

These benefits are available everywhere in California – including right here in LA County.

Farmers Market Boosts

Mama, did you know you can use your WIC benefits at local farmers markets?

At farmers markets like **Central Avenue Farmers Market** and **Crenshaw Farmers Market**, your WIC fruit & vegetable benefit can be matched dollar-for-dollar (up to a certain amount). This means you can bring home even more fresh fruits and veggies – more for your little ones, more for you, more for your table. Programs supported by the **California Department of Food & Agriculture** and local partners like **Food Access LA** provide these extra incentives, helping your benefits go further while supporting your family's health.



Why This Matters

Fresh food is your right, and these programs are here to help you thrive – not just survive. They stretch your benefits further, increase access to fruits and vegetables that feel familiar and nourishing, and support Black families and communities of color. Most importantly, they remind you that you are not alone – there is a village standing with you every step of the way.

In addition to these statewide benefits and LA County-specific incentives, WIC has updated its food package with more flexible milk choices, expanded whole grain options, and increased fruit and vegetable benefits for families. To explore the full list of new authorized foods, scan the QR code to learn more about these updates.

<https://qr.codes/ELwRkc>



A photograph of a woman with glasses and dark hair lying on her side, receiving a massage from a therapist. The therapist is wearing a white face mask and a grey shirt. The image has a warm, orange-brown tint. The word "Healing" is written in a large, pink, cursive script across the middle of the image.

Healing

**FROM SUBSTANCE
USE WITH DIGNITY**

Parenting with Support

For many Black mothers, asking for help, especially around substance use, can feel scary. That fear is real. For generations, Black families have been over-policed and punished instead of supported. Too often, Black mothers are reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) or separated from their children at higher rates than white mothers, even when facing similar challenges. Many have also had less access to safe, respectful treatment and counseling during pregnancy and after birth.

Black mamas deserve care that supports them, not judges them. That's why we have included trusted substance use prevention and treatment programs, along with affirmations, community resources, and practical tools to help you stay healthy and supported. This guide is here to help you protect your family, care for yourself, and navigate through pregnancy and the postpartum period with strength and confidence. You are not alone. You deserve care that sees you, honors you, and stands with you every step of the way.

Substance Abuse Prevention & Control (SAPC)

Pregnant & Parenting Women (PPW) Network

The Pregnant and Parenting Women (PPW) Network is part of LA County's Substance Abuse Prevention and Control System of Care. It provides specialized, no-cost substance use treatment and recovery support for pregnant and parenting women.

This program is designed to treat families as a unit – supporting both mother and child throughout recovery with compassionate, coordinated care.



Pregnant & Parenting Women (PPW) Network

Who Is Eligible?

You may qualify if you are:

- Pregnant
- Postpartum (up to 60 days after delivery)
- Parenting dependent children
- Working to regain custody of your children
- Caring for a substance-exposed infant

Youth and adults may access services at no cost if they:

- Live in Los Angeles County
- Have Medi-Cal (or are eligible/enrolled) or
- Are eligible/enrolled in My Health LA

(Active benefits are not required at the time of screening or referral)

Services May Include:

- Outpatient and Intensive Outpatient treatment
- Residential treatment programs
- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), including methadone and buprenorphine
- Withdrawal management (detox) services
- Recovery Bridge Housing
- Case management and recovery support services
- Primary medical and pediatric care
- Child therapy and supportive services
- Transportation assistance
- Child care support, including licensed-like and cooperative child care
- Housing options that allow minor children (0-16) to stay or visit during treatment

If you are pregnant or parenting and seeking support, you deserve care that prioritizes both your health and your child's well-being.

Need Help Now?

 **Substance Abuse Service Helpline**

(SASH): 1-844-804-7500

 **SUDTransformation@ph.lacounty.gov**



Finding the Oasis in a Food Desert



The Importance of Eating Well During Pregnancy and Postpartum

Proper nutrition during pregnancy and the postpartum period is essential for the health and well-being of both mother and baby. A well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet supports healthy fetal growth and development, helps reduce the risk of pregnancy-related complications, promotes a healthier birth outcome, and provides the energy and nutrients needed for postpartum healing, recovery, and breastfeeding.

Eating nutrient-rich foods during pregnancy supports the baby's brain development and helps prevent health issues like anemia and low energy. Foods high in iron, folate, omega-3s, and calcium are especially important. Drinking plenty of water and eating enough protein and fiber can also help with digestion, reduce fatigue, and make recovery after birth easier.



Natural Remedies for Common Pregnancy Discomforts



Morning Sickness

Ginger tea, ginger chews, or eating small meals throughout the day can ease nausea.



Heartburn

Almonds, bananas, and small sips of aloe vera juice (pregnancy-safe) can soothe irritation.



Constipation

Eating fiber-rich foods like prunes, flaxseeds, and leafy greens, and drinking warm lemon water in the morning can help.



Fatigue

Foods rich in iron, much as spinach, lentils, and dates, help boost energy. Coconut water is a great natural electrolyte drink.



Foods High in Vitamin D



Vitamin D is essential for bone health, immune function, and fetal development.

HERE ARE SOME NATURAL SOURCES:

Fatty fish | Salmon, mackerel, and sardines provide vitamin D and omega-3s.

Egg yolks | A simple way to add vitamin D to meals.

Mushrooms | When exposed to sunlight, they naturally produce vitamin D.

Fortified dairy and non-dairy milk | Options like almond or oat milk often contain added vitamin D.



Ancestral Healing Foods



Drawing from ancestral traditions, many foods have healing properties beneficial for pregnancy and postpartum:

Bone broth

Packed with minerals and collagen, great for joint health and postpartum recovery.

Leafy greens

(Collard Greens, Kale, Mustard Greens, Amaranth leaves)

Help prevent anemia and support blood health.

Sweet Potatoes & Yams

High in beta-carotene, which is good for fetal development.

Fermented Foods

Sauerkraut – Support gut health and immunity, crucial for postpartum recovery and digestion.



I Nourish

my mind,
body, and
and my

Spirit

with **kindness** and **intention**



Plastic Knowledge & Alternatives

As Black parents, choosing health for ourselves and our babies is an act of joy, protection, and legacy. Alongside nourishing foods and quality care, reducing exposure to plastics and harmful chemicals can support reproductive health and your baby's development. We want to be clear: this is not about fear or perfection. None of us can avoid plastic completely, and many of us are simply doing the best we can with what we have. To support you, we've curated simple alternatives and accessible information so you can make informed, empowered decisions that protect your family.

Plastic Information

Plastic is made from fossil fuels like oil and gas. The extraction of oil and gas and the processes involved in turning them into plastic release toxic chemicals into our communities. The plastic problem is a reproductive justice issue because many of the chemicals emitted or leached during the lifecycle of plastic are endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) that harm the human hormonal system, and can contribute to reproductive harm. Parents can experience disruption in their menstruation cycle, fertility, and hormone levels. Developing babies can face disruption of their brain development, premature births, and low birth weights.



An abstract watercolor splash in the top right corner, featuring a mix of orange, red, and blue pigments. The colors are blended and splattered, creating a dynamic, organic shape. The blue is a muted, dusty shade, while the orange and red are more vibrant. The overall effect is artistic and textured.

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What to Expect During *Postpartum*

Congratulations, Mama! You just brought life into the world, and that is powerful. As you and your baby transition into this new chapter, here's what to expect and how to care for yourself in those first sacred hours postpartum.

CARING FOR YOUR BODY



- Your uterus takes weeks to shrink back. You may still look pregnant, and that's okay. Give yourself grace and embrace your body's journey.
- Wear whatever makes you feel comfortable. Loose and breathable clothing may work best.
- Postpartum pads or adult diapers are a must.
- Research the ancestral practice of postpartum belly wraps or belly binding.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER BIRTH

- Holding your baby against your chest helps with bonding, regulating baby's temperature, and initiating breastfeeding.
- Nurses will monitor your bleeding, blood pressure, and overall well-being while also checking on your baby.
- You may feel strong cramps as your uterus contracts back down. This is normal but can be uncomfortable.
- If you're breastfeeding, your baby may latch within the first hour. If formula feeding, nurses will guide you through feeding options.

This is your time to rest, heal, and soak in these first precious moments with your baby! Lean on your girls, your support system, nourish your body, and honor your journey. You are powerful, you are loved, and you are doing an incredible job.

WHEN TO INVITE FAMILY & FRIENDS TO MEET BABY

There's no rush, Mama! Decide what feels best for you and your family. It's completely okay to want to bond privately first. If you're ready for visitors, establish boundaries such as short visits, no surprise drop-ins, and hygiene rules (hand washing, no kissing the baby, etc.). Don't feel guilty about saying no or delaying visits. Your peace is a priority.

I give myself

Grace

and **patience,**

as

I heal



Postpartum

LEAN INTO YOUR VILLAGE

BREASTFEEDING

NOURISHING YOUR BABY AND YOURSELF

Breastfeeding is a beautiful and powerful way to bond with your baby while providing essential nutrients that support their growth and development.

However, it can present challenges, and we are here to provide guidance and encouragement.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING

SEEK SUPPORT

from a lactation consultant or a Black-led breastfeeding support group.

ENSURE GOOD LATCH

to avoid discomfort and promote milk flow.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS to breastfeeding accommodations at work and in public spaces.

STAY HYDRATED AND NOURISH yourself with nutrient-dense foods to support milk production.

REMEMBER that any amount of breastfeeding is beneficial.



Postpartum LEAN INTO YOUR VILLAGE

IDENTIFYING AND MONITORING POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

Postpartum depression (PPD) can impact any mother. Recognizing the signs early can help in seeking the right support.

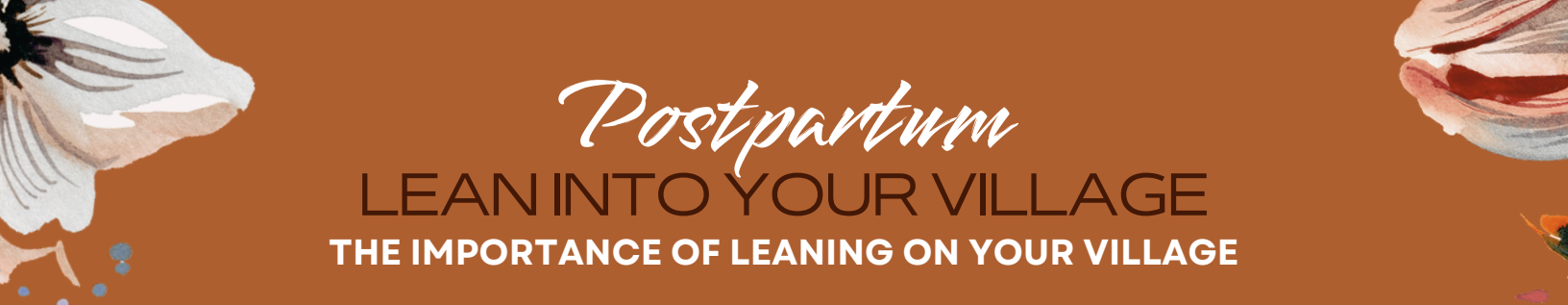
SIGNS OF POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

- Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, or hopelessness
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or excessive worry
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP

- Call **1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)**. The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline provides 24/7, free, confidential support before, during, and after pregnancy.
- Call or text “HELP” to **1-800-944-4773**. The Postpartum Support International Hotline provides information, encouragement, and names of resources near you.





Postpartum

LEAN INTO YOUR VILLAGE

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE

The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" is especially true during the postpartum period. Black mothers have historically relied on community support, and building your own village can be essential for your postpartum journey.

WAYS TO BUILD AND LEAN ON YOUR VILLAGE

- Identify trusted family members and friends who can help you around the house, with meals, errands, or baby care.
- Join Black parenting groups or postpartum support circles.
- Allow others to support you in ways that ease your burden.
- Communicate your needs clearly and set boundaries when necessary.
- Remember, your well-being matters. A supported parent leads to a thriving baby.

Mama, this is your time to rest, heal, and soak in these first precious moments with your baby. Lean on your support system, nourish your body, and honor your journey. You are powerful, you are loved, and you are doing an incredible job.



Embracing Black Joy **IN BIRTH + BEYOND**

As we conclude this guide, we honor the strength, resilience, and joy that define Black motherhood and the birthing experience. Black Joy: A Guide for Black Birthing People is more than a resource—it is a declaration that Black women and birthing people deserve care that is affirming, safe, and rooted in dignity.

May this guide serve as a beacon of knowledge, empowerment, and connection. Whether you are preparing for birth, supporting a loved one, or working to transform maternal health care, know that you are part of a powerful movement. Together, we are reclaiming our births, our stories, and our joy.

Let's continue to uplift one another, build community, and demand the care we all deserve. Black joy in birth is not just possible—it is our birthright.

With love, strength, and solidarity,
Black Women for Wellness



A GLOSSARY FOR *Empowered Motherhood*

Conception- The process of fertilization, when a sperm cell from a male unites with an egg cell from a female, resulting in the formation of a zygote that will develop into an embryo and eventually a fetus

Doula - a non-medical professional who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to women during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum

Midwife - a licensed healthcare professional who specializes in women's reproductive health and can provide medical care throughout pregnancy, labor, and postpartum

Birthing center - a medical facility, specializing in childbirth that is less restrictive and more homelike than a hospital

Preeclampsia - pregnancy complication caused by high blood pressure and protein in urine — usually develops after 20 weeks

Eclampsia - rare but serious complication in pregnancy that causes seizures due to preeclampsia

Ectopic Pregnancy- a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube. It can be life-threatening if not treated, as the fertilized egg cannot develop properly

Fetus: The stage of human development that occurs from the 9th week of pregnancy until birth

Postpartum depression - mood disorder that can develop after pregnancy. Characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety and changes in sleep, appetite, and energy levels

Gestational Diabetes - condition characterized by high levels of sugar in the blood during pregnancy, typically resolves after birth



A GLOSSARY FOR *Empowered Motherhood*

Premature birth - A birth that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy, rather than the full 40 weeks. Premature babies may face health challenges due to underdeveloped organs

Placenta previa - the condition where the placenta implants low in the uterus, partially or completely covering the opening of the uterus (the cervix)

Obesity - a condition characterized by excessive accumulation of body fat that poses a risk to health

Miscarriage/spontaneous abortion - the loss of the pregnancy before the fetus can survive – can occur anytime from conception to 24 weeks

Multipara - multiple viable births – after 20 weeks

Multigravida - multiple pregnancies, regardless of the outcome

Geriatric Pregnancy- A term used to describe a pregnancy in women aged 35 or older

Ectopic Pregnancy - a pregnancy where the fetus develops outside of the uterus, typically in a fallopian tube

CENTERING *Black Mothers*

INSIGHTS INTO RACISM, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING
FOR BLACK WOMEN AND INFANTS



Scan this QR Code
to access our
***Centering Black
Mothers Report*** which
contains trusted data
on Black maternal and
infant health in
California:





*Any
Suggestions?*



<https://qrco.de/bftedX>

We want to hear from you!

Scan to access our Black Joy Guide suggestions form.



***“Motherhood
is activism.
Raising free
Black children
in an unfree
world is
resistance.”***

— Tarana Burke



BLACK *Joy* GUIDE



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